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MINUTES OF CABINET MEETING

May 26, 1960

2:30 p.m. -- 3:50 p.m.

The following were present:

President Eisenhower

Vice President Nixon

Mr. Merchant  
for Sec. Hertler  
Sec. Anderson  
Sec. Gates  
AG Rogers  
PMG Summerfield  
Sec. Seaton  
Sec. Benson  
Sec. Mueller  
Sec. Mitchell  
Sec. Flemming

Mr. Stans, BoB  
Gov. Hoegh, OCDM  
Dr. Saulnier, CEA  
Gen. Quesada, FAA  
Mr. Glennan, NASA  
Mr. Dulles, CIA  
Sen. Morton, RNC



Mr. Bohlen, State  
Mr. McCone, AEC

Gen. Persons  
Mr. Harr  
Mr. Lyons  
Mr. Patterson  
Dr. Kistiakowsky  
Mr. Morgan  
Dr. Paarlberg  
Mr. Robert Gray  
General Goodpaster  
Maj. Eisenhower  
Mr. McPhee  
Mr. Kendall  
Mr. Merriam  
Mrs. Wheaton  
Mr. Minnich

Following the silent prayer, the President recalled Mr. Khrushchev's reference at the Summit meeting about "God as my witness." The President pointed out that Khrushchev had been very active as a youth in the Orthodox Church and had won prizes for his church work.

The President told the Cabinet that this meeting had been called so that they all might have an intimate account of events at the Summit and the Administration's interpretation of them.

The President wanted to point out something not yet imprint as regards the U-2, namely that a rocket might have been a near miss and perhaps have caused a flameout, thus putting the plane in trouble. However, it was fairly certain that the plane had not been actually hit by a missile. For one thing, had the pilot bailed out [ ] he would have frozen to death; also, the bullet holes that showed in the photographs certainly were not put in at [ ]

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E.O. 12815, Sec. 3-2A

MR 78-14041

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The President also wanted to emphasize, regarding the "cover" story, that perhaps there was a lesson here to count to 10 before saying anything at all. But he would not take this aspect too seriously, and if critics wanted to say this was a blunder, that would be their privilege. It was a cover story put out under assumptions that later proved incorrect. The President was certain that the Russians had made their decisions as to what they would or would not do prior to arrival in Paris. They had deliberately arrived in Paris on Saturday instead of Sunday, and had prearranged engagements for talking to our Allies. The question might be asked, the President went on, as to why they had come to Paris at all. Perhaps it was in an effort to split our Allies from us. Certainly their papers were all arranged in advance. The President speculated as to what might have been the outcome had he done the unthinkable thing of agreeing to Khrushchev's demands in the hope of keeping the conference going. To have done that would have opened the way for a continuing vilification throughout the meeting and an outcome of no accomplishment whatsoever.

The President repeatedly stressed the support given him by the British and the French, and he believed that the 3 countries were never so close together as they are now. He spoke in detail about Mr. Macmillan's cooperative attitude, quite the opposite of the stories in the New York papers about a rift between the British and the Americans.

..... The time worked out for issuing the communique on the failure was mutually satisfactory to all concerned.

Following the breakup, the President said, there had been time for the Allies to consider what might be future problems and to speculate as to Khrushchev's motives. It seemed clear that the U-2 incident was not the cause of the great switch since Mr. Khrushchev himself had spoken of knowing for so long about the U-2 flights. The President told of Mr. Khrushchev's jest to Mr. Macmillan on paying his farewell call. Khrushchev had said he supposed that Macmillan wondered why the Marshal was always with him, and that was because perhaps the Russian people felt that Macmillan was such a skilled diplomat he could twist Khrushchev around. The Marshal was there to see that Mr. Macmillan didn't, Khrushchev exclaimed! The President regarded this as some of Mr. Khrushchev's humor but with perhaps just a little truth in it, for Khrushchev's self-confidence might not be as great as it was when he visited the U.S.

Sec. Anderson took note of the fact that the Russians had cancelled a story that was to appear in the forthcoming issue of "USSR" -- the English-language magazine published by the Russians for circulation in the United States like our Russian-language "America." He wondered if this fact could not be made public. The President thought it might be looked at for that purpose. Allen Dulles said that Khrushchev's first statement about the U-2 was on May 5th and that the cancelling occurred on May 6th. This might have been done because of the way in which Russian officials in this country interpreted

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Khrushchev's remarks, although it was more likely that the cancellation was by direction from Moscow.

The President commented that some of his colleagues were of the opinion that the Russians were not so much concerned by the U-2 as they were of the prospect of his visit to Russia, so they seized upon the U-2 as a means of getting out of it. He thought it significant that Khrushchev insisted upon the opportunity to make the opening statement at the Monday morning meeting even though the President had discussed with De Gaulle a procedure whereby the President would open the meeting with his statement on discontinuing the U-2 flights. Khrushchev had proceeded to make, practically word for word, the same assertion that he had made privately to De Gaulle the day before about the U-2, then went on to treat in the same way and at about the same length the subject of the President's plan to visit Russia and the need for cancelling it.

At the President's request, Mr. Merchant then recounted for the Cabinet the background for the Summit meeting. He said the story really began in November, 1958 with Khrushchev's speech on Berlin and the intent to make a separate treaty with East Germany. The story progressed throughout all the various discussions and international visits up to this spring when it probably became an important part of Soviet thinking that there was a unanimity of views among the Allies finally developed as the Summit approached.

Mr. Merchant recounted in detail the visits of Khrushchev with De Gaulle and Macmillan on the eve of the Summit, the President's decision as to his position, and the statement to be made, the expansion of the Monday morning meeting so that Malinovsky could attend, and the 3-hour Monday meeting of the four delegations.

Mr. Khrushchev refused and gave his statement to the press Monday afternoon. On Monday evening, Macmillan called on Mr. Khrushchev but without result.

Mr. Merchant recounted events of Tuesday, noting that Khrushchev had rushed back from his rural tour after receiving the written invitation to the Tuesday afternoon Summit (re: U-2) meeting. Then had followed the ludicrous series of phone calls from the Russian Embassy until finally Khrushchev had replied in writing that he would come to a conference only for the purpose of receiving an apology from the President. Thereupon followed the meeting of "The Three" to consider the communique.

On Wednesday there occurred the final meeting of "The Three" when it was agreed to go ahead with the nuclear ban and the disarmament talks. Simultaneously, Mr. Khrushchev was holding his theatrical press conference which had the effect of strengthening the Allied position. Mr. Merchant spoke too of the solidarity and the stoutness of the French and the British which was very clear throughout the sessions. On Thursday, as the top officials were leaving Paris, the

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Russians made no effort at any level to re-establish communications with our people.

The President noted how Khrushchev had made so much of a point of our "threat" against Russia, even though we had not stated that we would continue the flights and had made it clear to Khrushchev. He had used the curious logic that since the United States had refused to confer under any ultimatum about Berlin, he could not confer under the U-2 threat.

Mr. Bohlen, as a preface to his remarks, emphasized how everything had to be guesswork as far as Russian thinking was concerned. Mr. Bohlen said three things stood out: it was clear during March and April that Khrushchev realized he would not get at the Summit what he wanted regarding Berlin, that there was within Russia opposition not to the policy itself but to the personal emphasis given by Khrushchev to his handling of foreign policy, and that the U-2 incident was probably a catalytic agent in view of the traditional great sensitivity of the Russians to any violation of their air space. Mr. Bohlen took note also of the extensive criticism of Khrushchev by the military, many of whom resented the dismissal of Zhukov, the reduction in force, the pension cut-offs, etc. Mr. Bohlen said that these things could not quite be sorted out, but it could be concluded that the Russians had seized upon the U-2 as a reason for sabotaging the conference. Without the incident, they might not have been able to preclude a conference and would have gone through the motions of one up to reaching a fruitless end. Mr. Bohlen thought it very significant that the statement Mr. Khrushchev had given to De Gaulle was not changed by even a comma when it was presented at the Monday meeting. This was obviously a "set" piece that he had brought with him from the Kremlin.

As to why he had bothered to come to Paris, Mr. Bohlen believed that Khrushchev thought he would find someone so anxious to have a Summit Conference that there would be pressure put on the President. Khrushchev's bitterness and expressed disappointment in De Gaulle and Macmillan provides a basis for this view.

Mr. Bohlen concluded by remarking that there had been no change of policy set forth by Khrushchev either in his press conference or subsequent speech in Berlin. However, it was possible that meetings were taking place even now in the Kremlin which could bring a change in policy. Mr. Bohlen thought that efforts designed to split the Allies could well be expected.

The President remarked on Mr. Hagerty's belief that there would be some value in publishing the President's originally planned opening statement which carried the date of May 11th. Mr. Merchant said that Mr. Herter was considering this and that there might be merit in doing so after consultation with Messrs. Macmillan and De Gaulle. The President said that he was not urging that this be done, but it might be a way of setting forth some solid views on the way to make progress toward reduction of tensions.

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The President then invited questions from the Cabinet members. Mr. Benson asked if there had been any subsequent direct word from Mr. Khrushchev to any of the 3 Allied leaders. The President replied in the negative. Mr. Rogers inquired about any psychological interpretation of Khrushchev's press conferences. Mr. Bohlen commented on how Khrushchev had been willing to hold a press conference anywhere, any time. He thought Khrushchev was a wonderful actor who was careful not to commit himself to any action even while indulging himself in great invectiveness.

Sec. Seaton inquired whether there was any basis for Khrushchev to miscalculate the unanimity of the Allies. Mr. Bohlen thought that the Russians always miscalculated in this regard. Perhaps the Russians had not expected De Gaulle or Macmillan to succeed in pressuring the President into accepting the Russian U-2 demands, but they might well have expected that this could isolate the United States from its Allies.

Sec. Seaton asked what might be the basis for Khrushchev to expect an Allied divergence. Mr. Bohlen replied that the only possible basis would be the critical stories that appeared in some places in the European press with regard to the U-2 incident. Because of their own practices, the Russians invariably interpreted newspapers of the free world as reflecting somehow an official position.

Dr. Glennan asked if any information had been picked up of any Russian criticism of the Russian government, particularly as to its failure to prevent the U-2 penetration. Mr. Bohlen replied that if there had been any such criticism, it was being kept very secret. Sec. Anderson asked if Malinovsky should be regarded as a spokesman for the Russian military. Mr. Bohlen thought not, for he is regarded basically as a political general even though he had a good wartime record. Mr. Bohlen referred to Khrushchev's jest to Macmillan and commented that of course Khrushchev would never doubt his own ability to handle Macmillan. Mr. Bohlen speculated that Khrushchev kept Malinovsky and Gromyko at his side in order to provide two witnesses who could subsequently testify to the Soviet Council that Khrushchev had not deviated by a single word from agreed positions. Mr. Bohlen recalled that in April it had been Khrushchev who had insisted on having strictly private talks with De Gaulle. He added that the Russian system, except for a period of Stalin's rule, is one where an approved policy cannot be changed by an individual, much as is the custom in the U.K. as regards policies approved by the British Cabinet.

There was brief reference to the United Nations' 7-2 vote in support of the United States.

Sec. Seaton then raised the question of how to handle the discontinuation of U-2 flights when the subject comes up during public appearances of Cabinet members. He saw a problem in that overemphasis on the value of the flights would create questions as to why we stopped them,

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whereas underemphasis on value would be a basis for questioning their continuation just prior to the Summit conference. The President explained that the U-2 was not the only mechanism for obtaining intelligence even though it was one of the good ones. Nevertheless, there are other means of obtaining information needed for our security. He said that he had been told that the U-2 would be overtaken within a matter of months by newer methods. The President added that the U-2 had been especially valuable for building up basic information about things that don't change rapidly. Mr. Gates added that the U-2 was not an alarm clock against surprise attack, rather it provided essential knowledge as to general posture. Allen Dulles recalled that when this U-2 operation had been approved in 1954, it was thought that the Russians would catch up to it in two to three years; actually, it had been of value for much longer than ever expected. Mr. Dulles and the President discussed briefly the matter of information as to targets and strategy.

General Persons expressed concern lest gratuitous discussions of these matters by Cabinet members would open the door for partisan comments by the opposition, particularly in view of the arrangements worked out with Leaders at breakfast with the President. Dr. Glennan thought there was additional value of avoiding further discussion in order to protect the nature of some of these things. The President said that he would limit himself hereafter to references to his earlier statements, for he felt he had said all he could on the subject.

With respect to the Congressional hearings, the President noted that the Leaders had agreed to regard these as an inquiry rather than an investigation. He cautioned that any publicity given testimony during the inquiry should be reviewed to insure that nothing was included of value to the Russians as to our judgment of their intentions. Mr. Bohlen assured the President this would be watched.

The President concluded the discussion by remarking on Mr. Fulbright's unsupported position in the morning discussion as to disavowing Presidential responsibility for covert operations. The President noted that he had said that if anyone needed punishment, the only person that could properly be punished was himself. Whereupon Mr. Rayburn jested that that would not be worthwhile since the President was leaving office so soon.

*JAM*  
L. A. Minnich, Jr.

Copy to:

Mrs. Whitman (2)  
 Mr. Gray  
 Mr. Minnich